

Dr. Curtis Elucidates Need for Playgrounds

Interesting Address at "Dutch Treat" by Man
Appointed Supervisor of System
in Washington.

At the "Dutch Treat" dinner of the playgrounds committee, given at the Pythian Hall, last evening, Dr. Henry Curtis, who has come from New York to supervise the development of public playgrounds in Washington, made a most interesting and instructive address, in which he described the conditions in American cities which necessitate the establishment of special facilities for the amusement of children, and drew an outline of the plans which other cities have found most effective and advantageous for conducting their playgrounds.

Beside Dr. Curtis, Commissioner Macfarland, Joseph Lee, of Boston; Cuno H. Rudolph, chairman of the committee; Edgar D. Shaw, Major Sylvester, and John B. Sherman made speeches. About 100 persons attended the dinner, and great enthusiasm for the playgrounds movement was shown.

Dr. Curtis' Address.

Dr. Curtis was given the closest attention by those present. He said in part: "The problem of the future is the problem of the city. The agricultural life of our forefathers, and the semi-rural life of our childhood are passing away. It must be so.

"In 1790 rather less than 4 per cent of our population lived in cities and villages. In the census of 1900 a little less than 60 per cent of the entire population of the country are said to be living in country districts. While in Massachusetts only 8.5 per cent, and in Rhode Island only 5 per cent are said to be living in the country.

"In the face of such conditions, it behooves the sociologist and the statesman to plan our cities that an environment of nature shall not be utterly excluded.

"The biologists and neurologists are constantly telling us that the city could not continue to exist were it not for the constant influx of fresh blood that it is receiving from the country; that city life leads to degeneration in the second or third generation. The cities are becoming too large to be replenished from the farms. The very continuance of our civilization is bound up with this problem of the city, and the central problem of this cluster of problems which the city represents is the child.

Playground Is the Answer.

"The playground is the main answer to this situation. The problem of the future of the city and of happiness for everyone is the avoidance of nervous strain and worry, the securing of fresh air, sunshine, and exercise. To all these problems the answer is the playground.

"The children without a playground and who constantly play in the streets cause a threefold nervous strain upon the inhabitants of the city. The first is upon the children themselves. They are exposed to the noise and dust and heat of the street to its constant interruptions and danger from vehicles. Second, a strain is put upon all bicyclists, motorists, drivers and chauffeurs who have to use the streets, while the children are there, and thirdly, a strain is put upon the parents of the children. In comparison to the relief afforded the cost of the playgrounds is infinitesimal.

"Since the days of our strenuous President, we hear much of race suicide and the blameworthiness of those who shun the responsibilities of parenthood. I agree with him entirely, but we have to consider, on the other hand, that the modern city is a hard place to rear children. It is the duty of the city under such conditions to make the care of the children as easy as possible.

Necessity for Play.

"As play is so necessary to the child, certainly more necessary than school to a child under eight or ten, the exigencies of our civilization demand that we furnish every child with a playground, and, at least, an acre of playground, to every thousand children, though four times as much would be better. This would mean somewhere from 20 to 200 acres of permanent playgrounds for the city of Washington.

"There should be some consistent policy of securing playground around all the public schools. Some of the German cities now require a minimum play space of 25 square feet of playground to every child in the school. London requires 22. Some of the Japanese cities require 35.

"The responsibility rests on Washington to a peculiar degree to make con-

ditions here ideal, because the whole country is looking to you, as the Nation's Capital.

"The first thing to be done in Washington, I conceive, is to get as much park space as possible. The conditions here are anomalous. I believe. There are some 270 parks for adults in the city and not one for children, yet the children have as good a right and certainly much more time to enjoy a park than adults.

"The small parks of New York are now mostly divided. One-half goes to the adults for a park, and the other to the children for a playground. So far as I have been able to observe the parents are as much interested in watching the children on the playgrounds as they were in former days in looking at the grass in the park.

Apparatus Not Necessary.

"A playground has three needs, space, apparatus, and leaders, but apparatus is by no means a necessity.

"To my mind there is almost no comparison in value between the use of a swing and the playing of a game. In the same, there are many brought together, thus becoming acquainted. There is competition and intense intellectual interest. Many children get good exercise. The children learn to imitate the teacher in playing the game, thus becoming polite and unselfish and just. Children that play together in a ring game become friends and a teacher will get more hold over the children in a week in this way than she will in a year with the children on the swings.

"I have no hesitation in saying the most successful feature in the playgrounds everywhere, is the kindergarten work. If I were asked to make an essential of a playground I should answer unhesitatingly, a kindergarten for small children and an athletic director for the older ones. I should fully as soon think of equipping a school with books and no teacher as to equip a playground with apparatus without a play leader.

Two Ways to Get Them.

"There seems to be only two ways in which these play leaders can be gotten for Washington. One is that the teachers should volunteer to do the work for nothing, and to such I say I believe that you are casting your benevolence on good soil.

"The second method to secure the leaders is that those who can afford it should give the money to pay the teachers. There is plenty of money in Washington, and if we all go to work right away we ought to have no trouble in raising the necessary money.

"Playground work is very cheap. It takes less than 10 cents a week to give a child a good time in a well directed playground.

Progress of the Work.

In his opening remarks Mr. Rudolph spoke of conditions obtaining at the time the playgrounds movement was started, and also spoke of the outlook for 1905.

Commissioner Macfarland, who followed, said: "The Commissioners are delighted that there is now a municipal provision for the maintenance of playgrounds. We never advocated any measure before

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MISSING WAR DEPARTMENT CLERK SUPPOSED TO HAVE LOST MEMORY



EDWARD H. ATKINS.

Has Not Been Heard From Since Last Wednesday, When He Carefully Prepared for Departure.

The Congressional committees so glad as we did the one which brought to you the deserved financial support, and added to that we were told that the appropriation this year was only the beginning. Work in the playgrounds is a good thing for the children and a good thing for you.

"President Roosevelt is in favor of the public playgrounds," said Chairman Rudolph, "and he wrote a letter congratulating those responsible for the work accomplished in Washington."

A toast was proposed for the President, and Major Sylvester was called upon to offer it.

A great and good man, who lives in the White House opposite Lafayette square, learned when a boy the value of play," said he major in leading the Chief Executive. "As a boy his health demanded activity, and in play he found not only the panacea for ills, but the groundwork for sturdy manhood that has raised him to the post of the first American of the day. He has taught much by his example."

Going back as far as 1897, Major Sylvester told of complaints of the deprecations of boys on the streets being so numerous that they were put under the head of nuisance, and also spoke of the problems then existing as to what to do with the small and the large boy. He favored the suburbs for the location of future playgrounds.

Mr. Lee's Address.

Opening his remarks with a particularly appropriate Biblical quotation, Joseph Lee, who is recognized as the leading authority in America on public playgrounds, carried his hearers through an analysis of the subject, replete with the trust of illustrations from life.

"I think the streets of a city will always have an important bearing on the play problem," he said, "the trouble being that the streets do not have the positive value of the playground. If you look carefully at the average boy or girl playing, you are struck at once by their seriousness. It is characteristic that the play of childhood is not play in the sense of relaxation, the play which does not come under the boy's heading of 'only fooling,' but which

means education. Why does the child drag something on the end of a piece of string, or carry sand from the pile in the street onto the front steps? It is not because so many mothers say the child wants to get dirty, but because the sand and the string are things which they can handle and thus gradually learn their powers."

Why Child Needs Play.

"Every child needs association with its equals," Mr. Lee declared, and then with a fine touch of humor, he said "the boy of four who has had the constant care of his mother, his father, his mother and all the servants for most of the morning, needs to come out to the playground where the other kids can relieve him of his burden of responsibility."

Summing up, Mr. Lee spoke of the three ages of childhood and their problems—the "sandbox" age, when the little hands must grasp something; the age of disillusionment, approximately reached at or about thirteen years, at which time all the erstwhile favorite games are abandoned, pastimes unless tending to bring out the "big inlay" are "silly"—and the age of "big boyhood" when baseball and football or anything which signifies the tendency to "team work," are the accepted medium of development.

California Trips at Special Rates.

Washingtonians who desire to make the trip to California in a particularly agreeable and attractive manner will be interested in the personally conducted excursion being arranged by Mr. W. B. Kelly of this city. This trip will be made via special cars by way of the "Sunset" Excursions, over the Southern and Southern Pacific. The latter announce in addition to the special rates already given, a special monthly round-trip rate to the Pacific coast until October. These tickets will give liberal stop-overs, with the privilege of returning via another route, one including Portland, where the Lewis & Clark Exposition is shortly to be opened. Full particulars at the office of the general agent, A. J. Poston, 511 Pennsylvania avenue.

EDWARD ATKINS STILL MISSING

Friends Believe Clerk Has
Lost His Memory.

IS NOT A DRINKING MAN

For Several Weeks, However, He Has
Been Overworked and Looked
Worried.

Edward H. Atkins, the War Department clerk, who disappeared from his office last Wednesday, is still missing. His friends believe that he is suffering with loss of memory. Since Thursday morning detectives and police have been searching for some clue to his whereabouts, but up to this time without result.

Atkins ever since the civil war, in which he won special recognition for bravery under fire, has lived with Mrs. Caroline A. Larner at East Falls Church, Md. By her he was looked upon as a son, and was known as "Uncle Andy" by her grandchildren. By all he is described as a man of jovial disposition, temperate in all things, and well liked by all with whom he came in contact. He did not drink, and is not known to have any debts. For several weeks, however, he has been overworked, and his foster family noticed that on several occasions he looked worried. This overwork it is believed, has temporarily unbalanced his mind, and friends think he is now wandering about, having even forgotten his identity.

Atkins is a clerk in the order division of the military secretary, and received a salary of \$1,500 a year. In 1897 he was appointed as a clerk in the adjutant general's office. This was done because of his excellent and unblemished record in Company 1, First Connecticut Heavy Artillery.

Actions Before Departure.

Methodical in all things, Atkins, following the custom of years, arose at 6 o'clock Wednesday morning, ate a hearty breakfast, and after chatting with H. G. Hopkins, his foster nephew, who lives in the same house, left in time to catch the 7 o'clock car, on which he has been brought to the city for years. Mr. Hopkins declares that his uncle was apparently in unusually good spirits.

When Atkins' fellow-clerks came to the office, they found him already at his desk, arranging the papers and putting things in order. At the time nothing was thought of this. Mr. Atkins was usually at his desk before the others, and often occupied spare time in straightening out his papers. With two friends he left for luncheon at the usual time, and is said to have eaten a hearty repast. Returning to his office he was seen to pick up letters and other documents of a personal character, and thus occupied his time until 4:30.

Took Two Satchels.

He took with him two satchels, one of which he carried to and from work every day, and containing soap, towels, and a tooth brush; the other, slightly larger, and rarely used, containing a change of linen and several collars. He packed these into his grip.

Mr. Atkins was well off, and is known to have had a large sum of money on his person at the time of his disappearance. One of his hobbies is the collection of old watch cases and gems, some of which, it is said, are very valuable. He had a number of diamond rings and gold ornaments stored away in a desk at the department, and before leaving he packed these into his grip.

One of Atkins' associates said today: "I am inclined to think that Mr. Atkins had been suffering from slight aberrations of mind of late."

"Several times when I asked him questions he did not reply directly. This was the case just before he left. I noticed that he had on rubbers, although it was a clear day, and asked him about it. He replied in some vague fashion."

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717 Washington St., Allegheny, Pa. H. B. FRANKLIN.

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